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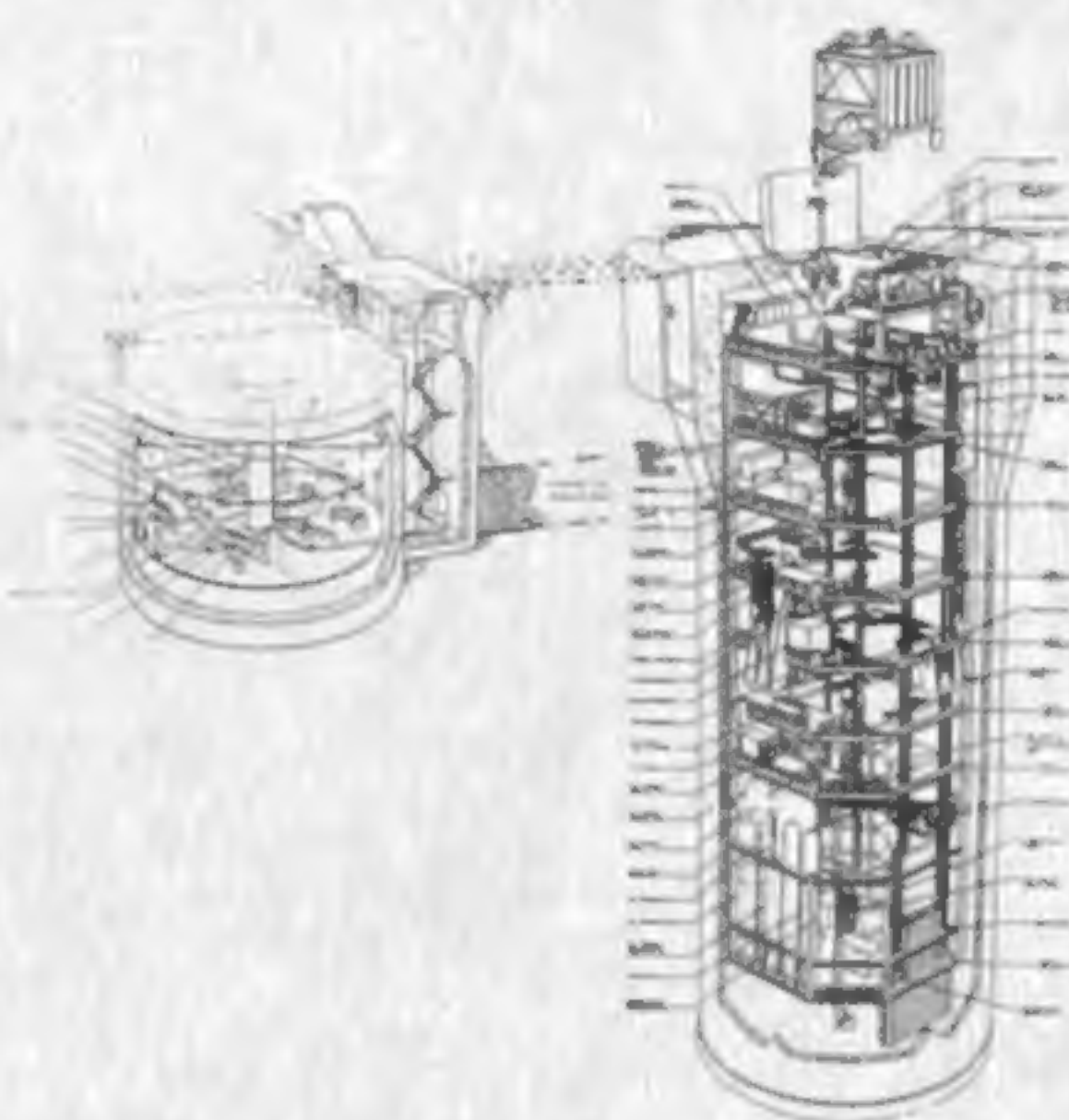
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FORMALHAUT, Cow Project, Vogelsberg, 1985. Photo: A. Beck

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FORMALHAUT

OTTMAR HÖRL, GABRIELA SEIFERT, GÖTZ STÖCKMANN



FORMALHAUT, Double Knight Game, Frankfurt 1989. Photo: A. Beck

All videos produced by TVT CINETEAM, Frankfurt

Text "Turks besieging Vienna and Grace Kelly to Silicon Valley" by Dr. Volker Fischer (Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt)

MARCH 27 - APRIL 21, 1990

Gallery Hours:
Tues. 12-8pm, Wed.-Sat. 12-6pm
Opening Reception:
Tuesday, March 27, 6-8pm

Discussion Program

Critical Issues in Public Art and Public Architecture

No. 48 March 29 / 7pm
Moderators: FORMALHAUT
No. 49 April 10 / 7pm
Moderator: Judith Barry
No. 50 May 8 / 7pm
Moderator: Mel Chin
No. 51 May 24 / 7pm
Moderator: Adrian Piper

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STOREFRONT

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CURRENT PROGRAMS

EXHIBITION

FORMALHAUT
PROJECTS BY
GABRIELA SEIFERT, GÖTZ G. STÖCKMANN, OTTMAR HÖRL
March 27-April 21, 1990
Wed.-Sat. 12-6pm, Tuesday 12-8pm

2 ARCHITECTS AND A SCULPTOR FROM FRANKFURT

My continued enthusiasm for Formalhaut and their work is something to do with the sustained challenge that they offer to my over-trained sense of context, tradition, profession, discipline, territory...call it what you will. They tilt at the foursquare mannerisms of behavior that are considered *appropriate* for young German architects and, though I am less qualified to judge, I have a hunch that they irritate the parallel self-satisfactions of the sculpture fraternity, who seem to have a fear that once you let architects get into the galleries they'll somehow or other take it all over.

But this would merely be a nice little bit of angst play if it were not that the example of Formalhaut is much, much stronger. For one thing, they are not predictable. In the history of groups both inside and outside architecture, there has tended to be an inevitable reduction in the range of explorations which at best (in the case of say, Coop Himmelblau) leads to an ever-increasing level of expertise.

It was revealing for me to sit in the audience at Formalhaut's Darmstadt presentation. An audience of 500 rather supercilious architectural students (Darmstadt thinks of itself as an elite school) were there to have a good laugh at the antics of this curious group. Formalhaut's decision to field Ottmar Hörl, the one non-architect, was interesting: he drew laughs, and has little architectural jargon at his disposal (thank goodness), but his humour was dry and his answers to questions revealed an innate intelligence. He is the hard man and soft man of the group all at once. Naturally ironic enough and tough enough to suddenly run into the wind—hence the 'cow-enclosure' made for himself: parts of his body quite literally hanging loose into an architectural space. Loose-fit, economic detailing, clear stylisation, environmentally adequate: this 'Sporthalle' is one of their best buildings.

It was revealing for me to teach Gabrielle Seifert some years ago. She is the most naturally graphic of the group: the softness of the line in her own work is a measure of the natural lyricism of her designing instincts. If you look hard, you will observe many, many instances in which the success of the Formalhaut work is the product of good "eye" as well as philosophical pitch. Now I know how many wise people (especially those who hang around academics and art or architecture journals) get very waxy about this question of "eye." It would seem that the important thing is to have the correct phrase from Derrida, thought from Beuys, admonition from Ungers, nuance from Rowe as a point of departure before turning a line... or at least to subscribe to the correct procedural principle before letting your eye in. Yet any really good group of artist-designers (and I deliberately introduce that word too) must have one member who can optically synthesize. It is the saying grace of both Himmelblau and Haus-Rucker, as it was with Archigram and Superstudio.

Of the three, it is Götz Stockmann whom I have the greatest opportunity to observe. What more can I say than to reveal that he has metamorphosed more than any other architect of my acquaintance over these nine years. A very able but "quick with an idea: and I can draw it overnight anyhow" operator when I first met him (by the way, it takes one to know one!), he has progressively intensified his discrimination, without losing the forward thrust of his work. As a teacher he gets better and better: very tough with himself. A clear example of the two-way usefulness of teaching as a day-long system of questioning, editing and referencing. As he develops more as a designer, he develops more as a thinker and a reader.



FORMALHAUT, *Cow Project*, Vogelsberg, 1985. Photo: A. Beck

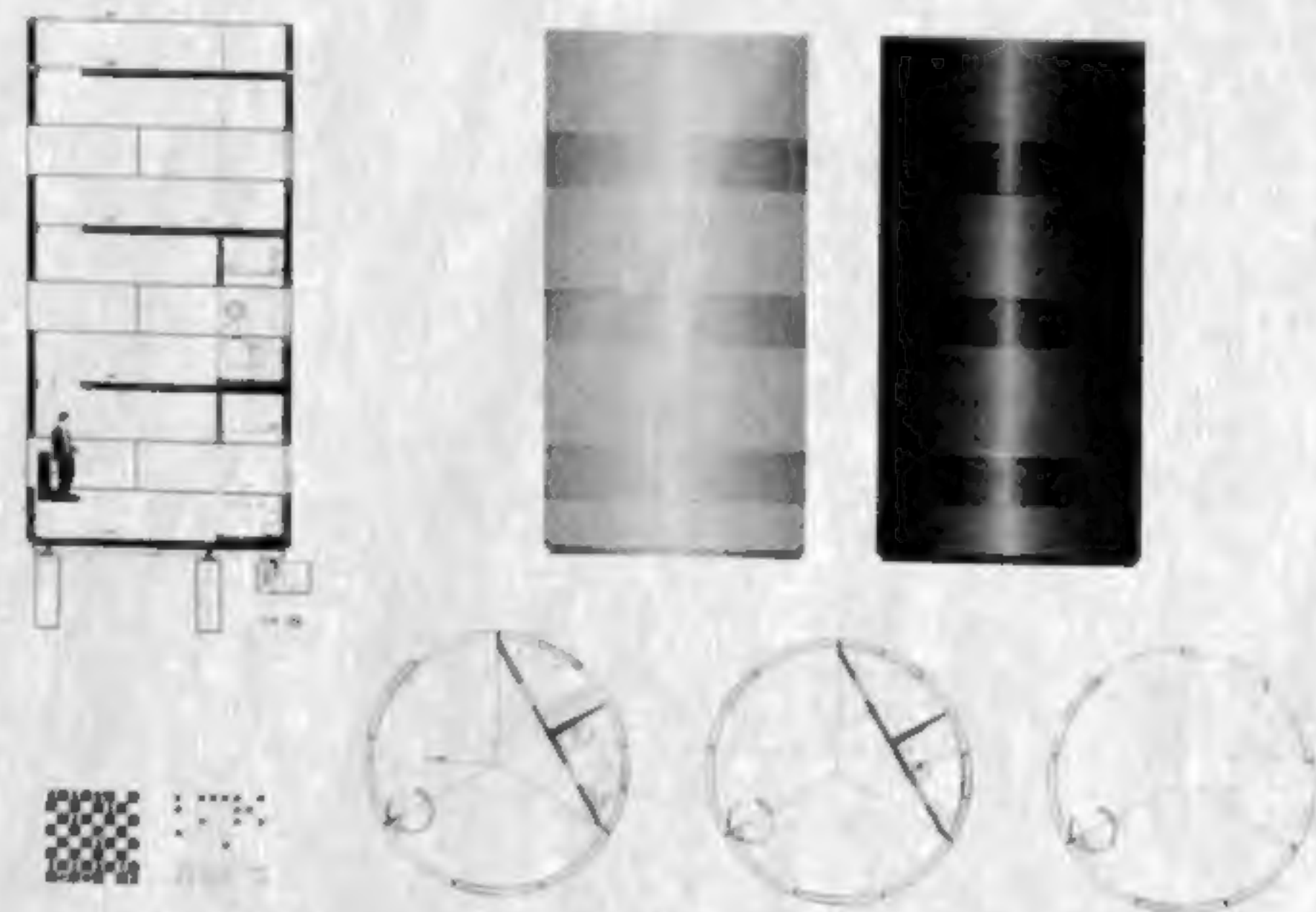


FORMALHAUT, *Rendezvous*, Morfilden, 1985.

The work of Formalhaut is, however, far from hermetic. One whole area of their work seems to be to do with wayward attachment to existing fabrics. The "skinning" of old gravel-pit workings and equipment was one, the wrapping of the gallery-house in Oslo another. In an installation in Hamburg, the internal skinning of part of the gallery space—though not the most technically successful of their works—still had the useful effect of forcing one to question what a piece of artwork is. What is a room? What is a piece of enclosed space that does not function as a room but affects light and space in a room? What is the referencing in a drawing that can be paralleled by a full-scale piece of substance and therefore trigger continual sideways glances between this and that drawing of what could be and what is? Somehow in this work they are avoiding the bland formalism of Post-Constructivist architecture.

At its worst, the architectural contribution to the story of art is just to do with pragmatic professionalism (my God, yes, they could take over the galleries), or sheer dimension. But at best it is to do with the inherited mandate to dabble and discriminate creatively across a tremendously large field of sources and inspirations. As the cows climb into the dismembered caravan that is itself a book of rules for dismembering a city that is made of shifting alleys seen through a translucent landed space-vehicle that ... what?... did I hear right?... calls itself a *museum*? Things are getting interesting down at Formalhaut.

— Peter Cook
Excerpted from "Formalhaut," STROLL No. 6/7



FORMALHAUT, *Houses for Singles*, 1988.



FORMALHAUT, *Grand Prix*, Magasin Grenoble, 1989. Photo: Q. Bertoux



FORMALHAUT, *Caravan*, Gallery Haffner Munich, 1987.

FORMALHAUT will speak at:
Columbia University/Wood Auditorium at Avery Hall... Wed., March 28/1:00pm

PUBLICATIONS

Front #3:
Project DMZ
Theoretical proposals by international architects and artists for events, strategies, designs, objects and ideas to provoke the elimination of the DMZ and the reunification of North and South Korea. With essays by Frederick Ted Castle, Ken Saylor and Kyong Park. 64 pp. 60 illustrations. \$8 paper.

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FUTURE PROGRAMS

PROJECT ATLAS

Project Atlas is an international competition organized by STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE, open to the participation of individual artists, architects and groups of interested people in any field. Twelve obsolete and abandoned Atlas missile bases remain in the region surrounding Plattsburg Air Force base, at the edge of Lake Champlain and the Adirondack Mountains, in New York State. The bases were designed to house the Atlas system, the first of a series of American InterContinental Ballistic Missile weapons, capable of delivering a nuclear warhead at a distance of approximately 6000 miles. The bases were operational for only 30 months, from 1962, when they were completed, to 1965 when they were deactivated in favor of a more advanced missile system. Each underground site consists of a steel and concrete silo 174 feet deep and 52 feet in diameter, connected through an access tunnel to a circular, two-story, subterranean control center.

In the bucolic landscape, the sites seem to have been left by an alien civilization. They are monuments to our age, projecting comparable mystery to works such as Stonehenge and the great Pyramids. In their present uselessness, they are singular remnants of human faith in the advancement of progress and technology. The same Atlas rocket put the first American in space, John Glenn; a technological paradigm of the first degree. Concurrently, with its speed and long-range capability, the Atlas ICBM became the first true instrument of global war. This required extremely complex guidance and electronic communication systems. The missile guidance systems perceive and coordinate to the Earth's magnetic field, rotation and the location of sun, moon and stars. This high speed transmission and elaboration of information involved a global network that quickly reduced our planetary conception to the true Global Village.

Project Atlas is a competition seeking to go beyond the creation of innovative designs for new and public uses of the abandoned Atlas missile bases in the North East. If today the arms race seems to have reversed its course, aiming towards disarmament, the 12 abandoned bases serve as metaphor for future issues. Are the silos monuments to a time we have left behind, or will they remain precursors to an empty world. How can communities whose main support comes from the military industrial complex survive in times of de-militarization? The intent of Project Atlas is to interpret the contradictions and enigmas of our age, at the beginning of a new decade and on the threshold of a new millennium: like a mirror, the project aims to reflect and reverse a reality. The project touches some of the most crucial issues in regard to our culture, industrialization and modernism, specifically challenging the formalistic truth and universal beauty embedded in pure forms and functions.

We welcome any proposition and/or ideas in the form of drawings, models, text, concepts or actions. Deadline for entries will be June 15, 1990. The proposals selected by an international jury will be exhibited at STOREFRONT, in New York City, September 13 - October 13, 1990. An entry fee of \$10 will be required by May 15, 1990 for each proposal submitted. Selected entries, texts and Jurors' comments will be published in a catalog to be issued in concurrence with the STOREFRONT exhibition. Entrants will receive a copy of the catalog. Arrangements are being made for a national and international tour of the exhibition.

For further information, please contact:
STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE
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Entry fee of \$10 per project. Please fill in the form to receive information on the project and sites.

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